



GLOSSARY *of* POLICE TERMS

A Guide *to* Commonly
Used Police Terms *and*
Their Definitions

About This Guide

This pocket guide is designed to help residents, businesses, and visitors to the District of Columbia to better understand the wide variety of acronyms and lingo commonly used by members of the Metropolitan Police Department. These terms are often included in police reports and other documentation, in our social media, and in the online community discussions hosted by Yahoo!

If you have a term that you would like to see included in this guide, please send it by email to police.glossary@dc.gov.

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Discussion

Stay in touch with your community and police leadership by joining the community email discussion group for your police district. Posts to the discussion are monitored by police leadership to provide accurate, timely responses to community questions. Residents are encouraged to ask questions and contribute suggestions to the discussion. To learn more, visit mpdc.dc.gov/emailgroups.

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A

A.K.A.: Abbreviation for “also known as”; synonym for “alias.”

AAG: Abbreviation for “Assistant Attorney General.” In the District of Columbia, an Assistant Attorney General represents the District of Columbia in all juvenile proceedings; minor misdemeanor proceedings, including Driving While Intoxicated, traffic violations, welfare fraud, and tax evasion; and felony proceedings involving parental kidnapping or felony fleeing.

ADW: Assault with a Dangerous Weapon — an assault in which the suspect uses a weapon to injure or wounds it in a threatening manner. Common subcategories include Knife, Gun, Shodfoot (kicking), Hammer, Rock, and so on.

Accessory: One who is not the chief actor in the offense, nor present at its performance, but is in some way involved, either before or after the act committed. One who aids, abets, commands, or counsels another in the commission of a crime. Synonym for “accomplice” or “abettor.”

Admission: Generally, confessions, concessions or voluntary acknowledgments made by a person of the existence of certain facts. In the criminal context, a statement by a person of facts which in connection with proof of other facts or circumstances, tends to prove guilt, but which is, of itself, insufficient to merit conviction.

Aggravation (offense; e.g. aggravated assault, aggravated battery): Any circumstance attending the commission of a crime which increases its guilt or enormity or adds to its injurious consequences, but which is above and beyond the essential constituents of the crime itself.

A/O: Abbreviation, often used in case reporting, for “arresting officer.”

Arrest: To take a person into custody, by authority of law, for the purpose of charging him/her with a criminal offense.

Arrest Warrant: A written order issued by a judge that directs a law enforcement officer to arrest a person and bring them to court.

Arson: Burning or attempting to burn a building owned by another, with the intent to kill or seriously injure a person.

Assault: An attempt or threat to inflict bodily injury upon another, along with the apparent ability to do so, which places the victim in fear of injury or bodily harm.

Attempt(ed) Robbery(ies): many crimes will result in no property taken but the suspect is still sought for the actions leading to the attempt.

AUSA: Abbreviation for “Assistant United States Attorney.” In

the District of Columbia, an Assistant United States Attorney represents the United States in felony proceedings and most misdemeanor proceedings.

B

Back Up: Police officers who assist the first responders.

Battery: Battery is causing bodily harm to a person by any means, or making physical contact with a person of an insulting or provocative nature.

Bench Warrant: A document issued by the court to mandate the appearance of an individual before the court.

Blood Alcohol Concentration (BAC): The concentration of alcohol in the bloodstream.

BOLO: “Be on the Lookout”; usually followed by a physical description of the subjects or persons of interest

Breathalyzer: An instrument used by trained operators to measure the Blood Alcohol Content (BAC) of a person’s breath.

BTA Form 51: Notice of Infraction, a form used by MPD to cite violators of the District of Columbia Municipal Regulations, Title 18, Vehicle and Traffic.

Burglary, First Degree: Entering a dwelling or room of another

that is used for sleeping, while any person is in any part of the dwelling or room, with the intent to carry away items or fixtures from the premises.

Burglary, Second Degree: Entering a dwelling, room, or building of another with the intent to carry away items or fixtures from the premises.

Burning One's Own Property with Intent to Defraud: Maliciously burning or setting fire to any building, vessel, or goods, owned by oneself, with the intent to defraud of injury any other person.

C Carjacking: Knowingly or recklessly by force or violence, taking or attempting to take from another person immediate actual possession of the person's motor vehicle.

Central Cell Block: A temporary confinement facility, located at 300 Indiana Avenue, NW, in which a prisoner is usually held for less than 48 hours, pending his/her release, arraignment, adjudication, or transfer to another facility.

Child: A person who has not yet attained the age of 16 years.

Child Sexual Abuse, First Degree: Engaging in a sexual act with a child under the age of 16 years, when the defendant is more than four years older than the child.

Citation: An order issued by the police requiring a person to appear on a specific day and do something therein mentioned

Citizens Advisory Council (CAC): A group of people in each police district who regularly meet to advise and assist the District Commander in reducing crime and disorder problems and promoting public safety. The Chief of Police's Citizens Advisory Council includes the chair of each district CAC, as well as at-large representatives.

Civil Action: A lawsuit to redress a private wrong, in which the remedies are money damages and/or injunctions.

Community Stakeholders: All individuals and organizations that have a vested interest in a safe and healthy community. This includes public and private institutions, social service providers, schools, churches, businesses, property owners, renters, and others.

Compl: used to describe the complexion of a suspect (such as "light," "medium," or "dark").

Complainant: The victim, the arresting officer, or the person or agency filing a complaint.

Complaint: A statement under oath whereby a witness accuses an individual of criminal behavior.

Confession: A person's admissions of enough facts to establish his or her guilt of a particular crime.

Conspiracy: Agreement with another, or others, to commit a crime, and an act by any party to the agreement in furtherance of the agreement.

Contempt: An act that constitutes a violation of a court order or disrespect toward the judge or the court proceedings.

Controlled Substance: A drug or substance regulated by federal or District of Columbia law, including opiates and hashish.

Court: A tribunal having authority under the Constitution to settle disputes.

Court Appointed Attorney: An attorney appointed to represent an indigent defendant or other indigent litigant.

Crime Triangle: A tool used in problem-solving. The sides of the triangle – victims, offenders, and the location – represent the three elements of every crime situation. The crime triangle is used in problem-solving to foster a thorough analysis of crime patterns and more effective actions that will reduce the harm caused by a problem.

Criminal Action: A lawsuit in which the state or the public, rather than a private party, is plaintiff, and the defendant faces

punishment such as a fine or incarceration if convicted.

D

D.O.A.: Abbreviation for “dead on arrival” as applied to a person who expires before reaching a medical facility.

D.O.B.: Abbreviation for “date of birth.”

Delinquent: A person under the age of 18 who has been adjudicated for an act that would be a crime if committed by an adult, and who requires guidance treatment, and rehabilitation.

Detective: A sworn member of the Department responsible for the follow-up investigation of crime.

Disorderly Conduct: An act which unreasonably alarms or disturbs another and provokes as breach of the peace.

Distribution of a Controlled Substance: Knowingly and intentionally transferring or attempting to transfer a controlled substance to another person.

District: One of seven geographical areas into which the Metropolitan Police Department subdivides its jurisdictions.

Driving Under the Influence: Driving while intoxicated with alcohol, as defined by law as .10 BAC and greater.

Drug-Free Zone: All areas within 1000 feet of a public or private day care center, elementary school, vocational school, secondary school, junior college, college, or university, or any public swimming pool, playground, video arcade, youth center, public library, or in and around public housing. Any person distributing or possessing with the intent to distribute a controlled substance within a drug free zone is subject to a fine up to twice that otherwise authorized to be imposed and/or by a term of imprisonment up to twice that otherwise authorized to be imposed.

E Evidence: Oral statements, documents, sound and video recordings, and objects admissible in court. To be admissible, evidence must be material (it must go to a substantial issue in the case) and relevant (it must go to the truth or falsity of a matter asserted).

EOD: Explosive Ordnance Disposal Unit. A unit of the Special Operations Division that responds to many of the suspicious package or vehicle assignments.

Extradition: The surrender by one state to another of an individual accused or convicted of an offense outside its own territory and within the territorial jurisdiction of the other, which being competent to try and punish him, demands the surrender.

F Felony: An offense for which a sentence of death or a term of imprisonment for one year or more is provided.

Field Search: The removal of coats, jackets or outer clothing to facilitate the search of these garments and those clothes the prisoner is wearing, such as patting down the prisoner and reaching into and squeezing his/her pockets and any items within their possession such as handbags, pocket books, book bags, etc.

Field Sobriety Test: Tests of coordination given at the time and on the scene of a traffic stop to assist in determining if an individual is intoxicated.

Frisk: A limited protective search for concealed weapons and/or dangerous instruments. Usually it occurs during a “stop” and consists of a pat down of the individual’s clothing to determine the presence of weapons or other dangerous objects. An officer may frisk a person on the basis of “reasonable suspicion” that the person is carrying a concealed weapon or dangerous instrument.

G Gun-Free Zone: All areas within 1000 feet of a public or private day care center, elementary school, vocational school, secondary school, college, junior college, or university, or any public swimming pool, playground, video arcade, youth center, or public library, or in and around public housing. Any person illegally carrying a gun within a gun free zone is subject to a fine up to twice that otherwise authorized to be imposed and/or by a term of imprisonment up to twice that otherwise authorized to be imposed.

H **Homicide:** The unlawful killing of a human being, including murder and manslaughter.

Homicide, Justifiable: A homicide based on the perpetrator's reasonable belief that he/she had no alternative but to use deadly or substantial force to protect himself/herself from immanent death or great bodily harm, or to prevent a forcible felony.

I **Indictment:** An accusatory document presented by a grand jury to the court, charging a named individual with a crime.

Information: An accusatory document filed in court by a prosecutor, without indictment, charging a named individual with a crime. The term derives from the prosecutor's statement that he makes his charges based on his "information and belief" rather than firsthand knowledge.

Intimidation: To threaten another in order to influence his behavior. The threat may include physical harm, restraint, confinement, or accusations of crime (even if true).

J **Juvenile:** A person under 18 years of age, also referred to as a youth. Also see minor.

L **L.K.A.:** Abbreviation for "last known address."

LS: Abbreviation for "Last seen" — last area and/or direction known for suspect

LSW: Abbreviation for "last seen wearing," usually preceding a physical clothing description.

Lockup: A temporary detention facility. While in lockup, the prisoner is photographed and fingerprinted.

Lookout For — aka LOF — this will usually precede a description of a wanted subject.

M **M.O.:** Abbreviation for *modus operandi*, Latin for method of operation. The pattern of behavior which is typical of how a particular offender commits a specific type of crime. Example: An offender who always wears dark glasses in the commission of a bank robbery.

Malicious Burning: Maliciously burning or attempting to burn real or personal property owned by another, of the value of \$200 or more.

Manslaughter: Unlawfully killing a human being without malice.

Manslaughter, Voluntary: Killing a human being with the intent to kill or do serious bodily injury, or with a conscious disregard of an extreme risk of death or serious bodily injury,

where the presence of mitigating factors (e.g. acting in the heat of passion caused by adequate provocation) precludes a determination that the killing was malicious.

Manslaughter, Involuntary: An unintentional or accidental killing without justification or excuse.

Minor: In the criminal context, a person under the age of 18 years. Also see juvenile.

Misdemeanor: An offense for which the maximum term of incarceration is less than one year.

Murder, First Degree: The killing of another with the specific intent to kill that person, with premeditation and deliberation, and without self-defense or mitigation.

Murder, First Degree Felony: The killing of another while committing or attempting to commit arson, first degree sexual abuse, first degree child sexual abuse, first degree cruelty to children, mayhem, robbery, kidnapping, burglary in the first degree while armed with or using a dangerous weapon, burglary in the second degree while armed with or using a dangerous weapon, distribution of a controlled substance, or any other felony.

Murder, Second Degree: The killing of another with the specific intent to kill or seriously injure that person, or acted in conscious

disregard of an extreme risk of death or serious bodily injury to that person, and without self-defense or mitigation.

N Negligent Homicide: The killing of another as a result of the careless, reckless, or negligent operation of a motor vehicle.

O Offense: A violation of the criminal law of a state or local jurisdiction.

Office of Police Complaints: The agency responsible for receiving, investigating, and resolving police misconduct complaints filed by the public against Metropolitan Police Department (MPD) and the D.C. Housing Authority Police Department (DCHAPD) officers. OPC is independent of MPD and DCHAPD.

Office of Unified Communications (OUC): The agency responsible for providing centralized District-wide coordination and management of public safety voice radio technology and other public safety wireless communication systems and resources, i.e. 911 and 311.

P PD Form 10: Traffic Accident Report, a form used by MPD to record traffic accident investigations.

PD Form 61D: Warning/Violation Citation, a form used by MPD to cite violators of the District of Columbia Municipal Regulations, Title 24, Public Space and Safety.

PD Form 99: Citizen Complaint Report, a form used by MPD to document complaints registered against employees of the Department.

PD Form 118: Defendant/Suspect Statement, a form used by MPD to document statements taken from a defendant/suspect.

PD Form 119: Complainant/Witness Statement, a form used by MPD to document statements taken from complainants, witnesses, and police officers.

PD Form 163: Prosecution Report, a form used by MPD to document arrests and charges lodged against suspects. This report records the violation of the laws and ordinances established in the District of Columbia and the United States.

PD Form 251: Event/Incident Report, a form used by MPD to document reported incidents or offenses that indicate a violation of the laws and ordinances established in the District of Columbia and the United States, as well as documenting miscellaneous reports.

PD Form 252: Supplemental Report, a form used by MPD to change the classification/case status of reports and record additional information regarding the crime, suspects, witnesses, and complainants.

PD Form 379: Juvenile Truant, Court, Contact and Juvenile Curfew, a form used by MPD to document all physical contact made with juveniles. It records the reported incidents or offenses committed by juveniles. This report records the violation of the laws and ordinances established in the District of Columbia and the United States.

Petty Offense: An offense for which the only allowable penalty is a fine.

Police Service Area (PSA): A geographic area in which problem solving takes place. The District of Columbia is divided into 55 PSAs. Each PSA is staffed by a team of officers and officials who work with the community to address crime and disorder problems.

Possession of a Controlled Substance: Knowingly and intentionally possessing a controlled substance.

Possession of a Controlled Substance with Intent to Distribute: Knowingly and intentionally possessing a controlled substance, with the intent of transferring or attempting to transfer it to another person.

Probable Cause: Where known facts and circumstances, of a reasonably trustworthy nature, are sufficient to justify a man of reasonable caution or prudence in the belief that a certain person has committed, is committing, or is about to commit a criminal act.

Problem: A problem suitable for police/community resolution has the following characteristics: it is a group of related incidents; it affects a number of people; it is unlikely to disappear without intervention; a number of people agree to work on it; and it can be impacted with available resources.

Problem-Solving Plan of Action: A record of activities and a contract of accountability for partners to address a neighborhood crime or disorder problem. It includes a problem description and an analysis of the problem; a community vision; short- and long-term goals; strategies for each partner to take to impact the problem, as well as methods to sustain success on the problem and build long-term partnerships.

Prosecutor: An attorney who brings a criminal action against va person in the name of the government.

PSA Team: The officers and supervisors responsible for a PSA.

R

Radar: Portable unit used by officers to determine speeds of approaching vehicles in the field.

Rank: Sworn Ranks in the Metropolitan Police Department are as follows:

Rank
Chief of Police

Uniform Insignia
Four Silver Five-Pointed Stars

| | |
|------------------------------|---|
| Assistant Chief (XO) | Three Silver Five-Pointed Stars |
| Assistant Chief | Two Silver Five-Pointed Stars |
| Commander | Silver Eagle |
| Inspector | Silver Oak Leaf Cluster |
| Captain | Two Silver Bars |
| Lieutenant | One Silver Bar |
| Sergeant | Three Chevrons |
| Master Patrol Officer | Two chevrons above a rocker that says "Master Patrol Officer" |
| Patrol Officer | |
| First Class (PFC) | One chevron |

Rape: The crime of sexual intercourse with a subject by force or threat of force, against the will and without the consent of the subject.

Reasonable Suspicion: A combination of specific facts and circumstances that would justify a reasonable officer to believe that a certain person had committed, is committing, or is about to commit a criminal; more than a hunch or mere speculation but less than probable cause necessary to arrest.

Robbery Fear: A robbery in which the suspect coerces the victim without physical force or weapon.

Robbery F & V (Robbery—Force & Violence): A robbery in which the suspect used physical force but no apparent weapons.

Robbery Hold Up Gun (Robbery HUG, or RHUG): A robbery in which the suspect displayed what the victim believes to be a firearm.

Robbery Hold Up Knife: A robbery in which the suspect displayed what the victim believed to be a knife or edged weapon.

Robbery Snatch: A robbery in which the suspect takes the property from the victim's person.

Roll Call: The first half hour of a watch, reserved for attendance, inspection, briefings, and training.

S

Search Warrant: A written order signed by a judge authorizing an officer to search for and seize property that constitutes evidence of commission of a crime.

Sexual Abuse: Engaging in a sexual act or sexual contact with another person with knowledge or reason to know that the act was committed without that other person's permission

Sexual Abuse, First Degree: Engaging in or causing another person to engage in or submit to a sexual act (1) by using force against that other person; or (2) by threatening or placing that other person in reasonable fear that any person will be subjected to death, bodily injury, or kidnapping; or (3) after rendering that other person unconscious; or (4) after administering to that other person a drug or intoxicant.

Sexual Abuse, Second Degree: Engaging in or causing another person to engage in or submit to a sexual act (1) by threatening or placing that other person in reasonable fear, or (2) where the person knows or has reason to know that the other person is unable to understand the nature of the conduct, or unable to decline participating in the sexual act, or unable to communicate unwillingness to engage in that sexual act.

Shoplifting: (1) Knowingly concealing or taking possession of personal property of another that offered for sale; or (2) removing or altering the price tag, serial number or other identification mark imprinted on or attached to personal property of another, which was offered for sale; or (3) transferring any personal property of another, which was offered for sale, from the container in which it was displayed or packaged to any other display container or sales package.

Statute of Limitations: The period of time within which lawsuits or criminal prosecutions must be brought, after which it is barred for lapse of time. There is no limitation on when a prosecution can be brought for murder, involuntary manslaughter, reckless homicide, treason, arson, or forgery.

Sworn Member: A member of the Metropolitan Police Department who takes an oath to support the Constitution of the United States and the laws of the District of Columbia and has the authority to make arrests and carry firearms.

T **Theft:** Wrongfully obtaining or using the property of another person with the intent of depriving the person of a right to the property or appropriate the property to his or her own use or to the use of another person.

Traffic Ticket: Ticket issued by a police office for a traffic infraction that one can either pay or appear in court to plead or argue.

U **Unlawful Entry:** Intentionally entering or attempting to enter a building without lawful authority and against the will of the occupant or the person in charge of the premises.

V **VIN:** Abbreviation for “vehicle identification number,” a unique identifier assigned when the vehicle is manufactured.

W **Warrant:** A written order issued by a judge that directs a law enforcement officer to arrest a person and bring them to court.

Watch Commander: A police official who directs all police activities within a District during a specific watch.

Watch: A police shift. The police workday is divided into three watches. The first watch begins at 11 PM or midnight; the second, at 7 or 8 AM; and the third, at 3 or 4 PM.

Witness: One who testifies as to what they have seen, heard, or otherwise observed and who is not necessarily a party to the action.

Y **Youth:** A person under the age of 18, also referred to as a juvenile.

YID: Youth Investigations Division, the unit of the Investigative Services Bureau that investigates crimes where the victim or subjects involved are below the age of 16; this unit is also responsible for investigating all missing person cases.



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